CAINITE GNOSIS AND THE SABBATIC TRADITION

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The figure of the biblical Cain, as associated with the Magical Arts, is known from the context of Italian witchcraft and Romany magic and folklore, as well as the esoteric orders of Freemasonry. Within the context of certain British witchcraft lineages Cain has come to occult prominence as the especial patron of the Witch's Art, the embodiment of Exile and Opposition explicit within the Elder Craft. These initiatic houses emerge principally from the Sabbatic Tradition - the body of rites and magical lore of the witch-cult, whose attributes achieved early written codification during the witchcraft persecutions of the late medieval and early modern era, and specifically concern the ecstatic magical practices of the Witches' Sabbath. Such concepts as the 'obscene kiss', nocturnal flight, and the *orgia* or sexual congress with the Devil form a part of this Mystery, which has also adopted the iconology of various religions and occult traditions. One of these traditions is the three-branched tree of esoteric Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the literary repository of the mythos of Cain.

These Mysteries of the first son of Eve, woven amidst the historical continuity of witchcraft teaching, are called by its modern proponents 'Cainite Gnosis'. In its rarefied embodiment of Crooked Path Sorcery - the ever-deviating path of Bane and Blessing, the power of Cain arises from the mythic forms of Transgressor-against-God, First Murderer, Wandering Exile, and First Tamer of the Horse, amongst many others. However, before considering the relevance of Cain to the Sabbatic Mysteries, it is useful to examine his historical congruence with the arts of sorcery, as well as with allied arcana of import to the witch's art.

From an historical perspective, Cainite Gnosis must in the first instance be properly defined as the ancient teachings of the Cainites, a speculative magico-religious Gnostic sect described by the second-century CE Church Father Irenaeus in his heresiological treatise *Against the Heresies*. Here a number of Gnostic and heterodox mystery-cults were described, many of which bore a greater resemblance to pagan magic and philosophy than to Christianity. Though surviving information is fragmentary, of particular interest to students of witchcraft is that the Cainite sect bears many features of an ancestral cult. Claiming descent from Cain, Esau, Korah, and the Sodomites, in whose heredity is expressed an especial power or Virtue, it is similar in many respects to Masonic appeals to lineal antiquity, or, in the parlance of the Old Craft, 'witch blood'. Also held in reverence was Judas Iscariot, and the Cainites were said to use the non-canonical *Gospel of Judas* as part of their liturgical material. As the initiating power behind the events of the Crucifixion, Judas embodied the Mystery of the Betrayal, an underplayed but essential Arcanum of the Cult of Christ.

The ancient Cainite sect, though scholars minimize its place in the greater historical purview of Gnosis, is also notable for its soteriology of 'Passing through All Things' in

order to receive salvation or illumination. This antinomian and transgressive view of Ordeal as a specifically spiritual arena finds philosophical resonance in the Sabbatic Tradition. The status of the initiate as an astral pilgrim, or wanderer-of-spirit, passing through endless experience to gain power, is a cipher of the Witches' Sabbath itself – the heightened ecstatic state akin to the alchemical *Al-Ambiq*, wherein all manner of fleshly bodies pass, to be transmuted into the most rarefied of spirits. This potential and manifest phenomenon has been expressed in numerous ways in the Sabbatic Corpus, from the Azoëtic 'Millions-of-Forms-of-Being' to the artistic portrayal of the ecstatic witch as legion: a multitude of human and bestial forms entangled in necro-sexualised abandon, ever-fecund in her embrace of the Dead and the Living-to-Be. As Andrew D. Chumbley wrote:

> …every nuance of the mental continuum which bears the fruit of realisation fulfils the lineage of Thought between the Primordial Mind – the Skull-palace of Cain – and the Present Mind.

As an inheritance of both orthodox and heretical Christianity, it is also likely that the entrance of the figure of Cain into esoteric magical practice followed the route of the medieval Christian mystery plays, which experienced a high degree of development in Britain. The Cain and Abel cycle, in which the Elder Brother slays the younger with the jawbone of a sheep, is frequently present, with narratives greatly expanding upon the character of the First Murderer. In passages both chilling and humorous, Cain curses God to his face whilst in exile, fully aware of the protection his Mark affords. Such portrayals, being popular extrapolations of liturgical material, would have been part of the common stock of ideas circulating amongst some practitioners of folk magic.

Most mystery play cycles also feature at their inception the Fall of Lucifer, a figure also present in some historical recensions of traditional witchcraft, and linked with the allied concepts of the paternity of Cain and magical heredity. In ancient traditions of Christian mysticism, an extra-biblical Greek text gives Cain the curious name *Diaphotos*, or 'luminous'; in the Latin *Life of Adam and Eve*, Cain is described as *lucidus*, or brilliantly shining. Similarly in the Armenian *Penitence of Adam*, the light-bearing omens of the birth of Cain were noted: 'Then, when she bore the child, the colour of his body was like the colour of stars.' The presence and significance of this luminosity, often debated by theological scholars without mystical consideration, is understood in the Sabbatic Tradition to signify 'witch-blood', the magical bequest of the heredity of Lucifer, in European tradition identified with Samael. Marking the status of Cain as a liminal being, this hyper-human radiance indicates an anatomy formed partly of fire and partly of flesh: a trans-angelic body borne of the union of earth and sky.

Well-known to students of witchcraft is Charles Godfrey Leland's *Aradia, Gospel of the Witches*, (1899) in which Cain, particularly his aspect of Lunar Prisoner, is situated in the context of at least one tradition of Italian witchcraft. More interesting than his presence in *Aradia*, and certainly more relevant to the Cainite elements of traditional witchcraft, is a number of teachings and spells directly related to Cain in Leland's earlier work *Legends of Florence*. Writing in 1895, Leland relates a love-spell invoking Cain in the Moon, together

with a prepared casket containing candles, salt, a mirror, and a photographic negative of the object of the witch's affections. A portion of the entreaty reads:

May Cain who bears the bunch
Upon his back, of thorns,
Stand by my lover's bed,
And make him rise from sleep
And hasten to my home.

O Cain! O Cain! O Cain!
Three times I call to thee,
Call with my loudest voice,
Just as I find myself between sea and sky,
And my two friends with me.

The presence in this spell of a photographic negative, a relatively new technology at the time of its documentation, might be cause for some to dismiss it as a modern invention. However, as an initiate of the Old Craft, I have observed an historical pattern of practitioners making use of what is perceived to be the most powerful elements of magic at any given time, whether they be ancient or modern. Aside from its properties of 'sympathetic magic', the use of the modern photo negative, juxtaposed with elements that clearly belong to an older magical strata, is one of the best arguments for the genuine nature and contemporary origin of the spell.

Aleister Crowley, whose *Book of Thoth* recension of the Tarot may be its most magically complete and advanced treatment, esoterically assigns *Atu VI* (*The Lovers*) to Cain and Abel, and, alternatively, he names the card *The Brothers*. Here, the Master Therion exposits the Cainite arcanum of ritual murder, and the implicit magical harmonics —rather than opposition — of the respective passions of Love and Hate. In Crowley's idealized form of the card, a serpent-entwined Eve attends upon Cain's right hand, which holds the blooded slaying hammer; Lilith presides over the left hand, which is open in a sign of innocence.

The juxtaposition of these emblems embodies an Arcanum well known to initiates of the Sabbatic Tradition, especially those who have embodied the Thelemic dictum of discovery and exaction of the True Will. This spiritual mandate resonates in many ways with the late Andrew D. Chumbley's admonition that sorcerers 'become the Magic which they practise'. Contextualised in a different manner, a new stream is born at the confluence of the Exile and the Path he or she walks:

> Thus is the sorcerer, wherever he may wander, become one with the Path of Cain, and the wisdom of the step is declared anew. First, by the stance of Exile as one apart and alone. Second, for the path declared, but also transgressed, its points of oscillation betwixt cure and curse: here the way is bifurcated and become Crooked. Third, for the threefold patterning of Exile, Pilgrimage, and Sojourn that is the bridge linking point-to-point-to-point in crystallisation of knowledge of the Way.

In the modern occult arena, Cainite witchcraft arcana was given new and original context with Andrew D. Chumbley's *Azoëtia* (1992)*, Qutub* (1995), and *One: The Grimoire of the Golden Toad* (2000), and through his various essays, initially published from 1990 to 2004. Cainite strands extant in wort-charming and herb-wisdom, often found in traditional witchcraft, were present in my own work *The Pleasure-Garden of Shadow*. However, in the context of traditional witchcraft, the mysteria of Cain received their highest outer expression in Chumbley's *Dragon-Book of Essex,* privately published in 1997-98. Also called the *Draconian Grimoire*, the work is a comprehensive body of praxis aligning hypostatic elements of the Old Serpent of Wisdom with the corporeal essence of the practitioner. One goal of the Work is the Assumption of the Body of Elder Light, or the Flesh of Cain, whereby the sorcerer is transfigured as the Serpent itself. Using formulae of stellar-telluric congress, the *Dragon-Book* emanates a complete body of sorcerous gnosis from the Sabbatic Tradition, which both deepened and gave magical extrapolation to traditional teachings concerning Cain as the bearer of Serpent-Blood, and the patron of magic itself. Though the work has remained private since its writing, a number of significant excerpts from it were published by Chumbley in preparation for its release. These include ritual conjurations of certain spirits of the Sabbatic Retinue, such as Mahazhael-Deval published in *The Cauldron*, which have been adopted by other groups aspiring to the witch's art since that time.

Another Cainite concept originating in the pages of the *Dragon-Book* is the concept of the Blood Acre, being the witches' name for the Eternal Field of First Murder, the First Magic Circle cast by Cain with the blood of his brother. Arising directly from Essex witchcraft, its specific arena of initial magical engagement was via the Rites Draconian. Though this term has been misrepresented outside the Cultus Sabbati by some popular occultists, it is instructive that there are none using it outside the order who indicate knowledge of the term from an initiatic standpoint. Here, there is a profound difference between the Blood of the Profane Man and the Royal Grain which grows from its right offering.

The embodied teachings and witch-lore arising from the Draconian corpus is referred to within the Sabbatic Tradition as 'Crooked Path Sorcery'. This is the realm of the Double-Ouroboros or Twin Circle, arising from the Gnosis of the Opposer or Opposition, a recurring feature of witchcraft. The Mysteries of the Dual-Circle or Crooked Path are usefully set against the Sorcery of the Magical Quintessence treated in Chumbley's *Azoëtia*, which concerns the Mysterium of the Single Circle, the Ipseity of Self as arising from the Witches' Sabbath.

As it relates to Cain, the Crooked Path of the Witch is reliant on a magical formula of Transmigration of the Flesh. The movement from the profane man (Abel) through the refining Fire of Transmutation (Cain) to a purified state of gnosis (Seth) is one means by which to re-present this process. In this schema, it is worth noting that Abel and Seth occupy hypostatic places in the journey of the initiate, with Cain being the active or dynamic force of progression between the two. This mystical pilgrimage of trans-embodiment, played out on a moment-to-moment path of the Sabbatic Initiate, is the very essence of the Crooked Path. Moving from a state of transgress against God or society, to

that against self, to that against transgress itself, the mystical state of perpetual 'self-overcoming' catapults the initiate beyond the sphere of the mundane into confrontation with that which lies Beyond. It must be noted that in the schema so described, Cain is the sorcerer who hold the profane in his left hand and the sacred in his right, the Master of the Chariot who "serves with both hands alike".

This perennial dual ethos of cursing and blessing is found amongst many traditional rural charmers and often underlies their greater corpus of practical magic. Though most do not outwardly define their Art as sorcery or witchcraft, its functional parameters are precisely that, adhering to taboos and strictures of practice which must, from the perspective of popular occultism, be considered both 'primitive' and 'elitist'. To place the phenomenon in a magico-religious context, I have often remarked that some of the most sincere Christians I have met are highly skilled practitioners of witchcraft, whilst many of the most un-Christ like persons profess his gospel most loudly.

One salient feature of the Sabbatic Cultus is its historical perpetuity as an atavistic cult. This is a temporally-defined feature incorporating the ancestral retinue of its chain of initiatic succession, but also, more generally, the wider reservoir of pre-incarnate existence latent in the Body of the Present. This feature arises from several traditional sources, including magical practices best technically described as necromantic, i.e. magical congress with the dead and discarnate. In these teachings, Cain is revered as the primal Ancestor of Wise-blood, the *protosarkos*, or 'first flesh' of the Initiated.

The origin of these teachings, many of which were orally-transmitted, is obscure. However, the focus on a magical heredity may have arisen in part from Near Eastern traditions informing Continental European magic through a number of historical vectors, principally Jewish and Christian mysticism, and the amalgam of those elements, taken in combination with Egyptian magic, found in Freemasonry. For example, in Esoteric Judaism, a number of legends attribute the paternity of Cain to the Serpent Samael, with Eve. In other legends, such as those of Freemasonry, Eve pre-existed Adam, and conjoined sexually with one of the Elohim (sons of God), described in those sources as 'primitive genii'. This union produced Cain, and angered Adonai, who set in motion perpetual enmity between the Sons of Fire, spawned of the Elohim, and the sons of profane earth. In these teachings, the descendants of Cain went on to discover and perfect the sciences, and build civilized society. These included the biblical Tubal-Cain, the ancient artificer in metals and the Arts of the Furnace.

In another published ritual text of the Sabbatic Tradition, Cain serves as the anchor-point of initiatic consciousness during the enfleshment of successive mantles of atavistic resurgence. The linkage with the atavistic and bestial hordes is, in part, a feature of the so-called Arcanum of the Turnskin, allied with the illumined state of initiatic consciousness whereby the Body of Exile is transfigured as New Flesh. This condition of transmutation is self-possessed, and recontextualised anew: separated entirely from, and without reference to, its previous pre-exilic situation. In Midrashic lore, this status is exemplified when Cain is mistaken for a beast of the wilderness, and slain by Lamech the hunter, his sixth-generation descendant. In other Midrashic traditions, the assumption of the Body of Exile extends to the physiological: Cain's mark, upon his wandering in the wilderness, assumes

the form of a horn, or horns.

Modern etymological analyses connect the Hebrew *Qayin* with *qyn* or 'spear', or with the ancient South Arabian word *qyn* 'smith' or 'worker of metals'. The related word *qanah* 'to create or acquire' also relates to the root *qyn* 'to forge'. An alternate theory connects Qayin with the Hebrew *qn'* meaning 'envy'. The resonance between Cain and the power of the smithy is brought to fleshly manifestation in Tubal-Cain, the descendant of Cain and first metallurgist, but also shares linkage with the Enochic stories of the fallen angel Azazel, occasionally portrayed as the rebel angels' leader. Azazel taught the forbidden arts of metallurgy-weapon smithing and the use of cosmetics to humans, a pairing often ridiculed by a number of casual readers, but one which is quite logical considering that swords and feminine beauty are traditional armaments of each respective gender. Here, the modalities of coercion and seduction, both of which underlie sorcery and witchcraft, are linked to the Saturnian arcanum of Acquisition, also a driving force of witchcraft and thematically allied with *qanah*. It is perhaps not surprising that a number of those involved in the Old Craft have been workers in metal and smithcraft, including Robert Cochrane, the late Magister of the Royal Windsor Cuveen.

For the Old Craft, perhaps the most important of Cainite Arcana is that of the Exile, the accursed and outcast one, yet him who at the same time is protected from harm by a divine mark. Witch-lore relays countless teachings of initiates being set apart from the common, whether for reasons of crime, heresy, or simply as bearing 'The Mark' of the Cursed, the 'Children of Red Earth filled with Black Fire.' This may well have had its origins in the legal and religious persecution of sorcery. We must not forget that before Christianity, pagan societies, as well as Judaic law, regularly persecuted sorcery and cultic activity deemed dangerous or heretical. Even in more recent times when lineages of the Old Craft were consolidating their teachings into the more formalized systems extant today, persecution and prejudice, or the living memory of it, likely shaped not only the relation of Cainite lore to the Witch, but all manner of initiatic protocols, especially those directly dealing with the vulgar society of the uninitiated.

There are specific examples of this exilic relationship in the ancient scriptures. In the *Book of Enoch*, Chapter 22, verses 1-7, Enoch is taken by the Archangel Raphael to 'hollow places' in the mountains, wherein the souls of the dead dwelled until the Day of Judgment. The groaning spirit of a dead man is beheld, making an entreaty to heaven. Enoch inquires as to the nature of this spirit and its actions. Raphael replies:

> This is the spirit which went forth from Abel, whom his brother Cain slew, and he makes his suit against him till his seed is destroyed from the face of the Earth, and his seed is annihilated from amongst the seed of men.

Here we find a reference that the descendants of Cain are not only cursed, but also to an ancient spiritual agenda of annihilating them. This is an interesting variation on the theme of Abel's earthbound spirit which can find no rest, but more important as an exemplar of the lore of perpetual war against the Seed of Cain. Historically, such esoteric mandates would not have gone unnoticed by the more literate of magical practitioners, nor by the Christian

clergy who sought to control their fate.

In the Circle of the Witch's Art, this state of Exile is perpetual. Neither affected nor contrived as a fashionable rebellion, it is instead the embodied paradox of those who 'Walk by Night' and yet must also 'Walk by Day' in complete anonymity amidst the world of the profane. Here, I must stress that the vast majority of those in attendance at the Witches' Sabbath would never be recognized as practitioners of the Art, either by occultists or by 'mundane society' –they pass amidst the world of men entirely unseen. As doctors, soldiers, government officials, barristers, clergy and other 'ordinary' citizens, they bear the wisdom of perpetual exile arising from their cyclic alienation from, and immersion within, the Great Round of Midnight. Such is the eternal gnosis of those who have embraced the Witch-Kingdom of Qayin-Azhaka, the Desolate Glory of Solitude, and put forth horns amid the thicket.

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Though certain traditional witchcraft groups are historically linked to this initiatic stream, the Cultus Sabbati is the only one to have adopted a public face, and indeed its literary corpus has been the definitive agency of the Sabbatic Tradition's emergence in the past quarter of a century. See the bibliography of Xoanon Publishing, *passim*. www.xoanon.co.uk

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Schulke, D.A. *Viridarium Umbris*, Xoanon 2005: 'The Book of Going Forth into the Field of Cain', op. cit., and also my article Schulke, D.A. 'Green Witch-Father: Agrarian Aspects of Cain in Traditional British Witchcraft' *The Cauldron* No 100 (May 2001).

The *Dragon-Book* in its outer form is forthcoming from Xoanon Publishing Limited. For further elucidation of these matters see my article 'The Ophidian Sabbat', *Starfire*, Volume II number 4, (January 2012) and Chumbley, A.D. 'A History of Crooked Path Teachings,' (2003) *Opuscula Magica* Volume 2, (Three Hands Press 2011).

'Invocation of the I', *Azoëtia.*

See, for example, Babylonian Talmud Yebamot 103b. Other non-canonical biblical texts of Semitic origin such as *Apocalpysis Mosis* refer to Cain as a 'son of wrath.' Consider also *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 21*: 'Riding on the serpent came to her, and she conceived Cain.'

Fitzgerald, Robert. 'Ozzhazael: Ritual Texts for Resurrecting the Primal Flesh of the Sabbatic Egregore'. *The Cauldron* No. 100 (May 2001)

Whilst the more commonly-ascribed origin of the name Abel is *Hevel* or breath, certain Rabbinical traditions hold its meaning instead to be 'vanity', which is more in accord with both the Masonic and Sabbatic view of Abel as the feculent concrescence of profane human nature.